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Letter dated 29 September 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine on the Russian Federation's Supreme Court decision to ban the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People (see annex).

I would appreciate your kind assistance in having the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 68 (c), and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Volodymyr **Yelchenko**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 29 September 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine on the Russian Federation's Supreme Court decision to ban the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People

The Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly protests against the decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation to uphold the decision to label the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People an extremist organization and ban its activities.

A ban of the highest representative executive body of the Crimean Tatar people under the false pretext of "fighting extremism" is an explicit affront by the occupying Russian authorities to the rights and interests of the Crimean Tatars. Under article 280.1 of the Russian Federation Criminal Code, on "extremism", the so-called "law enforcement authorities" of Crimea initiated a number of criminal proceedings against the Deputy Chairman of the Mejlis, Akhtem Chiyhoz, and Crimean Tatars Ali Asanov, Mustafa Dehermendzhy, Eskender Cantemir, Eskender Emirvaliev and Arsen Yunusov (the "26th of February" case), as well as the deputy head of the Mejlis, Ilmi Umerov, and other Ukrainian citizens of Crimean Tatar descent.

We consider this cynical decision a manifestation of racial discrimination. This is a step expected of Russia's highest court, totally consistent with the Kremlin's current repressive policies which aim to fight against democracy and freedom and transform the occupied peninsula into a "grey zone" of terror and lawlessness.

During its 2½ years of occupation, the Russian Federation has not only deliberately and systematically violated human rights and restricted freedoms in the Ukrainian Crimea but also completely destroyed the independent mechanisms that guarantee and protect these rights. In particular, this is signified by the deliberate ban of the Mejlis — a government body which has effectively defended the rights of the indigenous people of the peninsula and functioned for decades — and its replacement with the Russian-controlled "Qirim".

We fully recognize that the independent and deliberate civil position of the Mejlis and its consistent support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and its international standing made it the target of the Russian Federation's political persecution. By labelling the Mejlis's work illegal and arbitrarily pursuing activists from this body and the Crimean Tatar people as a whole, the Russian Federation, in fact, operates with Stalinist methods, the culmination of which was the criminal act of the mass deportation and extermination of the Crimean Tatars in 1944.

Ukraine demands that the occupying State immediately reverse this decision, which is null and void in its essence and judicial nature, and completely cease the persecution of the Crimean Tatar community in Crimea.

Ukraine also appeals to its international partners to intensify actions to protect human rights in the occupied Crimea, including to ensure unimpeded access for

international and human rights monitoring organizations and their main conventional and monitoring mechanisms to provide for the continuous monitoring of respect for human rights.

Ukraine believes that the definitive end of the persecution of the Crimean Tatars by the occupying authorities as well as other issues related to the illegal occupation of Crimea can be achieved only through the de-occupation of the territory and restoration of the foundations of international law and order therein and respect for international law and for human rights.

Ukraine will prove in courts the illegitimacy of all of the Russian Federation's actions connected to the temporary occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, including the decision to label the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people an extremist organization and ban its activities.